

## Part 4

Total: 7 marks  
Total marks for Reading: 26

Read the article and answer the questions. Write a maximum of five words for each answer. An example is done for you.

### The law of the land

There are two distinct systems of law in Britain: one governing England and Wales, and one governing Scotland. Both systems have their own court structures, but they are alike in having separate courts for criminal and civil law. Generally speaking, criminal law is concerned with wrongs against the country; civil law with disputes between private individuals. The main purpose of the criminal court is to punish, while that of the civil court is to compensate, usually financially.

#### The criminal courts

Ninety per cent of all criminal cases in the English system are dealt with in the 900 or so Magistrates' Courts. Generally, these are less serious crimes. More serious crimes, such as murder, may be sent to the Crown Court for trial by judge and jury if there is enough evidence. Most magistrates are unpaid and without legal qualifications, but in some of the larger cities there are professional magistrates who are paid. These paid magistrates make decisions alone whereas most magistrates make decisions in groups of three.

The Magistrates' Courts have their origins in 1195 when 'Knights of the Peace' were first created; their duties were essentially to keep the law and act as police officers. These duties slowly evolved until 1361, when the first Justice of The Peace was appointed; in other words, the first magistrate.

The Crown Courts not only deal with more serious crimes but also handle appeals against magistrates' decisions. On a plea of not guilty, a case in a Crown Court will be heard by a judge, whose job is to interpret and explain the law and pass the sentence. But the guilt or innocence of the accused is decided not by the judge but by a jury of twelve carefully chosen people.

#### The civil courts

There are about 330 civil courts which date in their modern form from 1846, when they were established to deal quickly and cheaply with smaller claims. A large amount of their work is connected to property issues and divorce. Cases are usually decided by a judge alone but small claims are settled by a registrar.

The history of the superior civil courts is extremely complicated. Today, there are three divisions of the High Court: the Family Division, dealing with marriages and children; the Chancery Division, concerned with money and property; and the Queen's Bench Division, which handles most other cases.

#### Other courts

Old English law had many other small courts which no longer exist. One older court that still exists is the Coroner's Court. As well as investigating suspicious deaths, the coroner can also investigate any fires that happen in London.

**Example:** How many types of CRIMINAL court are there in England and Wales? ..... *two* .....

1. What does the civil court usually do?

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2. Where would the most serious crimes be tried?

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3. What can paid magistrates do that others cannot?

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4. What was the main job of the Knights of the Peace?

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5. In a Crown Court, who decides if someone is guilty?

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6. What does a registrar deal with?

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7. Who would decide if someone died in a strange way?

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